

California Strategic Growth Council: 2024 Catalyst Conference

Progress in Place: From Power Building to Project Implementation

California Natural Resources Headquarters

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Negotiating Non-Negotiables: A Framework for Community Benefits Plans

Session Leads

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Session Overview

Community Benefit Plans (CBPs) are non-binding agreements developed by community organizations and developers to outline the community's priorities for a development project and the developer's commitments to those priorities, such as affordable housing, job creation, and local hiring preferences. Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) are a possible outcome of a CBP and create a legally binding contract that defines the benefits the community will receive for supporting the developer's project. Increasingly, funding entities like the Department of Energy (DOE) are requiring community benefit plans to access funding. While CBPs can help to ensure project benefits flow to host communities, the development of CBPs can add additional time and cost to already resource-intensive application processes.

This session provides an overview of current CBP requirements and offers strategies for developing and implementing multi-benefit CBPs that support continued access to funding and other opportunities. We will challenge participants to reframe community benefits as a set of nonnegotiable conditions linked to new investments or resource extraction in communities, rather than a simple check-the-box exercise in a community. And we will encourage participants to invest in community-driven processes and mechanisms to conceive of holistic benefits that go beyond basic jobs and workforce development investments – that can truly capture the needs of a community and link the fulfillment of those needs to major infrastructure investment project agreements.

Session Outcomes

- Understand the basic elements of community benefits plans (CBPs) versus community benefits agreements (CBAs), and the expectations that federal agencies have of CBPs and CBAs that are necessary to unlock federal resources.
- Demonstrate the limitations of traditional approaches to community benefits planning: e.g., benefits planning that does not adequately consult the community; a simplistic focus on traditional benefits such as jobs and basic workforce training; a lack of mechanisms to monitor outcomes and ensure accountability after benefits are defined and agreed to.
- Introduce best practices and inspiring case studies for bold and holistic community benefits planning and community benefit agreements. Share “insider” lessons learned on both sides of the table when it comes to negotiating community benefits, including ways to be prepared and pitfalls to avoid.
- Allow participants to share their own experiences—including successes and tips, but also challenges—when it comes to identifying and negotiating community benefits in the context of infrastructure investment or other major investments in their community.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the following recommendations and best practices:

- Categorizing community benefits into economic justice, education, employment, environmental justice, health equity, housing, public realm, and other benefits.
- Strategies for meaningfully centering community voices and influence in the development, negotiation, deployment, and monitoring of community benefits.
- Ways and governance models to help ensure benefits are measurable over time and that project owners and investors are held accountable to goals.

Session Resources

- [Session Powerpoint](#)
- [About Community Benefits Plans | Department of Energy](#)
- [Community Benefit Agreements Toolkit | Action Tank](#)
- [Blue Green Alliance](#)
- [Community Ownership for Community Power – Common Counsel Foundation](#)